

Activity 6

Avoiding Comma Splices

The most common punctuation error in student writing is when two sentences are joined (spliced) together with only a comma between them. This error, called a comma splice (or run-on sentence), creates problems because readers can't tell where one sentence ends and the next begins.

In all of the following practices in this text, avoid writing comma splices. To help you learn how to eliminate them, do activities 6 and 7.

Example of a Comma Splice

His heart pounding, his lungs inhaling and exhaling like a bellows, Alfred, lunging toward his opponent Jacobs in the third round with his left, swung but missed, recovering from the miss, he turned swiftly, aimed again, and this time connected squarely with Jacobs' jaw.

Robert Lipsyte, The Contender

Best For:

Use one of these four ways to eliminate comma splices:

Sentences
that are so long
they become
confusing

1. Make two sentences:

His heart pounding, his lungs inhaling and exhaling like a bellows, Alfred, lunging toward his opponent Jacobs in the third round with his left, swung but missed. *Recovering* from the miss, he turned swiftly, aimed again, and this time connected squarely with Jacobs' jaw.

When the
transition of
the FANBOYS
word intensifies
clarity or
meaning

2. Keep the comma but add *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, *yet*, or *for* (coordinating conjunctions) to join the sentences:

His heart pounding, his lungs inhaling and exhaling like a bellows, Alfred, lunging toward his opponent Jacobs in the third round with his left, swung but missed, *but* recovering from the miss, he turned swiftly, aimed again, and this time connected squarely with Jacobs' jaw.

When a
pronoun is
using in the

3. Change the comma to a semicolon:

His heart pounding, his lungs inhaling and exhaling like a bellows, Alfred, lunging toward his opponent Jacobs in the

2nd sentence to describe the subject of the original sentence, and using the subject's actual name would seem repetitive / OR for use in a juxtaposition

third round with his left, swung but missed ☹ recovering from the miss, he turned swiftly, aimed again, and this time connected squarely with Jacobs' jaw.

Best For:

When the transitional word intensifies clarity or meaning

4. Change the comma to a semicolon, and add *nevertheless*, *however*, *therefore*, *moreover*, *in fact*, *for example*, *consequently*, or *as a result* (conjunctive adverbs), and put a comma after the conjunctive adverb:
- His heart pounding, his lungs inhaling and exhaling like a bellows, Alfred, lunging toward his opponent Jacobs in the third round with his left, swung but missed ☹ *however*, recovering from the miss, he turned swiftly, aimed again, and this time connected squarely with Jacobs' jaw.

Practice 1

Locate and eliminate the comma splice by making that comma a period and capitalizing the next word to create two separate sentences.

- 1a. When Mark Twain,
 - b. the famous author
 - c. whose real name was Samuel Clemens,
 - d. was a boy of fourteen,
 - e. he thought his father was stupid,
 - f. when Twain reached 21,
 - g. he was amazed how much his father had learned.
- 2a. Extremely arrogant and conceited
 - b. Jackson didn't understand how his overpowering style affected his lack of friends,
 - c. his manager,
 - d. after watching his ego swell after the game,
 - e. told him to think more of others, and less of himself.

- b. that common breakfast cereal,
 - c. is not just for breakfast anymore,
 - d. mushy and semidisgusting,
 - e. it's good for other things,
 - f. like putting in your little brother's shoes,
 - g. his baseball glove,
 - h. or his ears.
- 4a. As the storm,
- b. a blizzard that lasted two days,
 - c. covered the landscape,
 - d. blanketing everything in white,
 - e. Jake Slatterly,
 - f. whose job was to make sure provisions were ample,
 - g. began to worry,
 - h. he made a plan,
 - i. one that was by no means certain of success,
 - j. to hitch one of the horses to a wagon,
 - k. drive the little-used road on the other side of the mountain,
 - l. and with luck and a lot of prayers,
 - m. get to town to buy some grub and coffee.

Practice 2

Locate and eliminate the comma that is the comma splice, using a variety of ways to eliminate the comma splice. (Review pp. 18–19.) *Use at least one of each way.*

1. In large metropolitan areas, the yellow pages are a useful means of locating businesses, services, and products, the

2. Very overweight and stocky, Mr. Jackson didn't understand fully how his weight problem affected his health, his doctor, after giving him a physical, put him on a strict diet of fruits, vegetables, and lean meat.
3. I am not ashamed to admit it, I do enjoy reading a good book, one which is entertaining, one which stimulates my thinking, and one which captures my imagination.
4. Sliding over the ice-covered road, the car lost traction briefly, spun toward the edge of the highway, but finally righted itself, the car in the other lane, fortunately, moved out of the way.
5. Wandering aimlessly for days, Indiana Jones couldn't escape the dreaded banana bearers, his companion, after surveying the situation, suggested they put bags over their heads, run around in circles, and climb trees quickly.